

VZCZCXRO7847
RR RUEHROV
DE RUEHDS #2620/01 2350928
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 230928Z AUG 07
FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 7547
INFO RUCNIAD/IGAD COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 ADDIS ABABA 002620

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

DEPT FOR: DS/IP/AF, DS, IP/ITA, AF/E AND CA/OCS/ACS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [CASC](#) [ASEC](#) [PTER](#) [ET](#)

SUBJECT: ADDIS ABABA EAC MEETS TO ASSESS SECURITY SITUATION RELATED
TO THE ETHIOPIAN MILLENNIUM

REF: STATE 80096

¶1. (SBU) On August 22, the Addis Ababa Emergency Action Committee (EAC) met to assess the security situation in regards to the Ethiopian Millennium (celebrated September 12). EAC members present included COM, A/DCM, ORA, DAO, CJTF HOA, POL/ECON, USAID, CDC, CONS, Peace Corps, Health Unit, MGT, PAS, the U.S. Mission to the African Union, MSG, the Africa Center for Strategic Studies, and RSO.

THE MILLENNIUM VENUE - STILL UNDER CONSTRUCTION

¶2. (SBU) Thousands of visitors (primarily Ethiopians returning from the Diaspora) are expected to visit Ethiopia throughout the year for the Millennium celebrations (reftel). The primary Millennium celebrations will occur the evening of September 11 at a large public venue in Addis Ababa near Bole International airport. A recently constructed concrete, steel frame, and fiberglass structure (similar to an aircraft hanger) will serve as the main venue and is expected to accommodate 15,000-20,000 guests. This structure will have two floors: the ground floor for the general public and a second-floor balcony for VIPs. With a little more than three weeks to go, this venue still requires extensive construction (completion of the perimeter wall, site grading/preparation and completion of the building and other facilities). According to event organizers, celebrations will be simulcast to large billboard-size televisions in at least two venues in Addis Ababa (one directly adjacent to the main venue and the other located at a major square/traffic intersection in the center of Addis Ababa), as well as to other similar venues throughout the country. A private Millennium event will also be held at the Addis Ababa Sheraton hotel.

¶3. (SBU) It is difficult to determine the number of visitors to Addis Ababa for the immediate Millennium period. While many major hotels in Addis Ababa report being fully booked for the Millennium, and many home-owners are leasing their private residences to visitors, tickets for commercial air carriers into Ethiopia during this period are still available. The Millennium celebrations will undoubtedly draw significant interest of the local population within Addis Ababa and the surrounding environs.

MILLENNIUM STAR SEARCH

¶4. (SBU) The musical band the Black Eyed Peas are also expected to perform in Addis during the Millennium. Most local citizens will view the event for free at the two public venues. Additionally, the Great Ethiopian Run will take place o/a September 9-10 and is expected to draw large crowds to Addis Ababa.

SECURITY CONCERNS

15. (SBU) Obviously there is concern among the Government of Ethiopia (GOE) regarding ensuring security for this event as well as throughout the city. Not only is the current threat in the region high, but also this event falls on the anniversary of September 11 and occurs when the GOE is actively engaged in military operations in Somalia and a counter-insurgency campaign in the volatile Ogaden region. Possible threats include extremists from Somalia, the Ogadeni National Liberation Front (ONLF), the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), al-Qaeda (who publicly declared Ethiopia to be a viable target after Ethiopia's December 2006 military intervention in Somalia), Eritrea, and other indigenous terrorist/opposition groups.

The GOE assures us they are taking all necessary precautions to ensure security. During the past several weeks, the GOE has stepped up vehicle inspection security check-points on all roads leading into Addis Ababa and reported the uncovering of two possible terrorist plots. Increased police and security service presence was also noticeable in Addis Ababa. Ensuring security for such a large and high profile event in the current threat environment would be a monumental task for any country, more so for Ethiopia with its law enforcement, defense and security services already heavily engaged on three fronts (Ogaden region, Somalia, and Eritrea).

16. (SBU) The event organizers advise there will be access control and security screening at the primary Millennium venue. It will be more difficult to secure the public Millennium venues, and even more difficult to secure the crowded streets and countless private entertainment venues. All these venues present viable and lucrative terrorist targets.

WHAT WE EXPECT

ADDIS ABAB 00002620 002 OF 003

17. (SBU) While there is a good chance Ethiopia's Millennium celebration will pass without noteworthy incident, given the current threat in the region, this event poses a significant security concern and challenge. In the best case scenario (nothing happens), the Embassy is anticipating the following security concerns:

--Commercial communications (cell phone and land-lines) are disrupted or otherwise unavailable. The large influx of visitors could easily over-burden commercial communications networks, making them unavailable. In the past, the GOE has also cut off commercial communications networks (primarily cell phone) as a security measure;

--Severe vehicular traffic and pedestrian congestion, making it difficult to easily move around the capital, Addis Ababa;

--Road closures and security checkpoints;

--Significantly enhanced host country police and security service presence around Addis Ababa and environs;

--Enhanced security at major hotels;

--Local cafes, night clubs, restaurants and other entertainment venues will most likely experience significantly increased patronage. Most have little if any security;

--Increased request for American citizen services from visitors who get into trouble, are the victims of crime, or who require other Embassy assistance;

--Increased possibility of petty street crime;

--Possibility of crowd control issues at the public venues;

--Possibility of crowd and access control issues at the Millennium venue near the airport;

--Possibility of increased motor vehicle accidents, especially late

at night due to intoxicated drivers;

--Delayed response due to traffic congestion of Embassy security and emergency response personnel to situations that arise.

EMBASSY RESPONSE

18. (SBU) The current Consular Affairs East Africa warning cautions American citizens to avoid "prominent places." The official Ethiopian Millennium celebration venues would most certainly fall into this category. In addition, the EAC deemed it prudent to advise official Americans to undertake the following precautions:

--Do not attend or go to any of the public Millennium celebration venues. If in Addis Ababa, stay close to home during the Millennium period;

--Avoid prominent places and large crowds;

--Embassy personnel who have a official representational requirement to attend the Millennium events will do so in an organized manner coordinated by the RSO, staying at the event for the shortest time possible in accordance with protocol and security concerns;

--Have a three-to-four-day supply of food and water at residences in the event one is unable to move around town;

--Ensure adequate cash currency (local and USD) is on hand for emergencies;

--Carry and monitor embassy-issued two-way radios at all times. Post recently received 200 additional two-way radios to issue to USDH, MOH, and EFM personnel. These radios will serve as back-up communications in the event commercial cell and landline phone networks are unavailable, and as primary communications in the event of a developing security situation requiring rapid notification of the Mission community;

--In the event of a major incident, all official Americans will be subject to rapid recall to ensure accountability and provide whatever assistance is required in accordance with Post's Emergency Action Plan and their abilities;

--Ensure fuel tanks of vehicles and generators are filled;

--The Mission is taking precautions to stage armored vehicles, and ambulances with medical supplies and drivers, at various locations

ADDIS ABAB 00002620 003 OF 003

around Addis Ababa, to provide enhanced response in the event of traffic congestion;

--Mission satellite phones will be assigned to key locations and individuals to ensure communications in the event of disruption of local commercial communications networks. The numbers/assignments will be forwarded to the Department (SEPTEL);

--An ALDAC has already been issued (reftel) advising USG personnel to defer official travel to Ethiopia during this period;

--All three RSOs will be in-country during the Millennium and in close contact with other international security chiefs, host country law enforcement/security services, and other relevant contacts;

--The Ambassador will limit embassy operations for a four day period (Sep. 11-14) during the Millennium. Most Embassy personnel will have a difficult time getting to work. Essential personnel will be on duty or available;

--Official personnel are prohibited from traveling (official and personnel) within Ethiopia (outside Addis Ababa) during this period;

--Security posture at the Embassy and other official locations

(USAID and CDC) is already good. Post's local guard force (LGF) and surveillance detection team (SDT) have been briefed regarding the situation and will be on a heightened state of alert.

WARDEN MESSAGE

¶9. (SBU) Post's consular section will work with the Department to draft and release a warden notice reminding American citizens to avoid prominent places and regarding the elevated threat in East Africa (especially Ethiopia) due to ongoing events in the region.

¶10. (U) Direct any questions regarding this matter to RSO Addis Ababa.

YAMAMOTO